






# Don't Burn Trash at Your Campsite

Sometimes it is tempting to toss paper, foil, plastic packaging and other garbage into a campfire to burn. Today we know that these materials are not harmlessly destroyed, but are instead released into the environment and ultimately affect the health of people and wildlife. Burning trash, even paper, can release acidic gases, heavy metals, particulates, and toxic chemicals such as dioxin into the environment. Some pollutants from burning accumulate in the food chain, contaminating fish and other foods. Partly burned trash can be scattered by wind and wildlife causing serious litter problems at campsites.

-  Open burning of trash can release up to 80 times more air pollution than high tech municipal incinerators.
-  Trash and debris burning causes 40% of all forest fires.
-  Short term health effects may include eye, nose, and throat irritation; lung irritation and congestion; skin irritations or burns; eye damage and headache.
-  Repeated exposure to toxins released by burning may cause developmental problems in children and can increase risk of developing cancer.
-  Ashes contaminate soil and ground water, creating additional environmental problems.



Michigan Department of  
Environmental Quality



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor  
Steven E. Chester, Director

# What Can I Do?

- Pack food and supplies in reusable containers.
- Use garbage cans or dumpsters when available.
- Pack in what you need, pack out the waste.
- Recycle cans, plastic bottles, papers, and glass. Remember cans and bottles are usually prohibited in designated wilderness areas.
- Keep campfires small and burn only wood. Use natural materials for kindling. (Never burn treated wood. The ash and smoke can be extremely toxic.)

**Keep our children, forests, and wildlife  
free from contamination!**

**DON'T BURN TRASH!**



800-662-9278

[www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq)

(1/2004)